

# The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929

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by Robert J. Baptista May 27, 2011



**Joseph W. Imbriaco (1908-1929) in Flight Jacket**

Joseph W. Imbriaco was born on May 30, 1908 in Elizabeth, New Jersey. He was the son of Italian immigrants Giovanni (John) and Carmela Imbriaco. The Imbriacos were a working class family of nine brothers and sisters who lived at 44 Reid Street, a few blocks away from the Italian section of the city known as Peterstown. The names of the other children were Annie, Dominic, Nunzio, Viola, Millie, Patrick, Mary and Louise.

My late mother Viola, who was Joe's younger sister, spoke about him often. She had been named Valentina at birth but really disliked this name. One day Joe went with her to the office of the elementary school she attended and had her name changed to Viola.

My Aunt Louise Hubbard, the youngest Imbriaco, said Joe graduated from high school. This would have been the Thomas A. Edison Vocational School. Joe went to work for the Metals Disintegrating Company which had a plant on Lehigh Avenue in Union and an office in Elizabeth. The plant produced zinc, copper, tin and aluminum powders. Some of the steps involved chemical processes. The company was founded in 1916 by Professor Everett Joel Hall, who taught metallurgy at Columbia University and pioneered the production of metal powders. His company had a research laboratory at Columbia for many years.



**Prof. Everett J. Hall**



**Metals Disintegrating Co., Union, NJ ca, 1920s**

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Professor Hall liked Joe's job performance and saw his potential, so he enrolled him part-time in chemistry courses at Columbia, with the company paying for his tuition. My Aunt Louise Hubbard, now 91 years old and the youngest of the Imbriaco children, said he would dress formally on days he went to Columbia, the custom of the era, and always looked forward to the classes.

Joe's older brothers Dominic and Nunzio enjoyed tinkering with cars and were working as auto mechanics. My cousin Frank Imbriaco, a son of Joe's youngest brother Patrick, now 95, says Dominic was the lead motorcycle mechanic for the Elizabeth Police and that Joe was an expert mechanic too. He drove a Harley-Davidson motorcycle to work. Joe would usually win friendly arguments with his brothers about engines, motorcycles and cars.

In February 1929 his attention turned to flying, telling the family he wanted to become an air mail pilot. The late 1920s-early 1930s period was the golden age of aviation and Joe wanted to be a part of it. He may have been influenced as a child by the stories of the gallant American fliers who soared over the battlefields of France in WW I downing German planes. These exploits were widely published in the newspapers, magazines, books and movies.



**Left: WW I Air Service Recruiting Poster-Library of Congress. Right: "Last Victory" by contemporary artist Roy Grinnell ([www.roygrinnell.com](http://www.roygrinnell.com)) depicts American WW I flying ace Arthur R. Brooks in his Spad XIII, downing a German Fokker. Copyrighted Image Courtesy of Roy Grinnell.**

Another influence on Joe's interest in flying may have been the presence of the Standard Aircraft Company plant in Elizabeth. During WW I this company took over the large manufacturing complex of the John Stephenson Trolley Company to build military and air mail planes. The plant was located at the juncture of Bayway and Brunswick Avenues and employed over 1,000 at its peak. The company had its own airfield on site. A photo of the delivery of six air mail planes to the Post Office is shown below:

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**The Standard Aircraft Co. of Elizabeth Delivers Six JR 1B Air Mail Planes to the Post Office.  
Photo: Life, August 6, 1918**

The solo flight of Charles Lindbergh across the Atlantic in May 1927 was a stunning achievement in the early days of aviation. The widespread publicity may have further motivated Joe to try flying. There were some interesting parallels between Lindbergh and Joe-both were mechanically inclined with an interest in cars and motorcycles, were attending college, and were only 20 when they started pilot training.

And Joe may have really become hooked on flying if he took one of the joy rides in an open cockpit plane offered from nearby Newark Airport, which opened on October 1, 1928. Area airports posted promotional signs on roads that read:

### **YOU WILL FLY TOMORROW-WHY NOT TODAY?**

A five minute ride cost \$5. A tour over New York City was \$10. At Newark Airport the tours were run by the Newark Air Service Inc., established in 1928 by Captain John O. Donaldson, one of the most highly decorated WW I fliers.



**Logo of the Newark Air Service. Joe took instruction at their flight school.**

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Donaldson was the 4th-ranked American ace with nine Fokker kills. He was himself shot down, captured by Germans, and managed a daring escape from a POW camp. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, the Belgian and French Croix de Guerre, and received the British Distinguished Flying Cross personally from the Prince of Wales. He resigned his commission in 1920 and became involved in commercial aviation.

Newark Air Service was also a charter plane business for carrying passengers and freight. An affiliated company was Newark Air Instruction Inc., a flight school which held the exclusive license for training pilots at Newark Airport. These operations were based in one of the airport's first hangars, located on the far right of the photo below. The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum in Washington checked their archived aircraft registration records and reported that Donaldson purchased five Waco 10 biplanes in the late 1928 to early 1929 period. He leased a hangar from the City of Newark to establish the first general aviation company at the new airport. The first runways were paved with cinders and a man waving red and green flags controlled the runway traffic. Later a rudimentary control tower was placed atop an old oil derrick.



**View of Newark Airport, ca. 1928 or 1929. Note Waco Biplanes on Tarmac.**

**Photo: Fairchild Aerial Services Inc., New York.**

Joe's pilot log book was not saved but we know he had four to five hours of flying to his credit, initially with instructor Donaldson. I spoke with Aunt Louise and she said that he flew on Sundays, telling the family he would fly over their home on Reid St., and they actually saw his plane passing overhead.

One night John Imbriaco begged his son to give up flying, citing recent accidents at Newark Airport, but Joe assured him there was nothing to worry about. The next day was Sunday, March 3, 1929, so Joe went to church and then drove to the airport for another flying lesson.

Aunt Louise recently sent me a letter with more details of her remembrances of Joe and the events of that day. She was ten years old at the time:



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*"When I look at my brother Joe's photo, which I have enlarged in a frame, I remember him so handsome, lovable, and always smiling. He always gave me and Mary money to go to the movies, our milk money for school, and to put in our piggy banks.*

*I remember on Sundays my father, first thing in the morning, would go buy a large cheesecake for us. On that sad day, when Joe was leaving, he said to his mother in Italian "Mama, don't forget to save my piece of cheesecake".*

In the afternoon, she was in the kitchen, heard a knock on the door, and answered it. There were two men from Newark Airport who wanted to talk to her father. John and his oldest son Dominic came to the door and were shocked by the news that Joe was killed in a plane crash at noon while flying with instructor Peyton Schenck who also died. Carmela broke down crying. My brother Joe said my mother remembered that she and several other siblings had gone to the movies and received the dreadful news upon their arrival home.

Aunt Louise continues her letter :

*"I remember my father asking me and Mary to go over to Anna's house and tell her what happened. We had no phone then. Can you picture me (10 years old) and Mary, 13 years old, walking up to Elizabeth Ave. and Broad St, and to Race St. where Annie and Fred lived with baby Eleanor, crying all the way!"*

Newspaper reporters came to the home seeking information about Joe, with John telling them how much the family was concerned about the risks of his flying. The story was published nationwide.

Joe's body was recovered early Monday morning, March 4, 1929 after 15 hours of effort by the Newark Fire Department, which used extension ladders from the fire truck to bridge the marshy land.

Aunt Louise continues her letter:

*"I remember my father had to go to Engel's funeral home to identify Joe. We knew Joe had a tattoo of an Eagle on his right wrist, which my father saw. What a sad ordeal that was for him!!"*

*"The viewing was for three days! So many people came to our home. The most unexpected thing to see. His body was in the casket, but his head and face covered with a gray cloth! That was really heartbreaking! Dear God! I still miss him, as I do of my sister Anna, Viola, Millie, Mary, and brothers Dom and Nunzie, brothers-in-law Joe (your Dad), Emil, Al, not forgetting my dear Frank. May they always rest in peace."*

After a funeral mass at St. Anthony's Church, Joe was laid to rest on March 7, 1929 in the Elmwood section of the Rosedale Cemetery in Linden, New Jersey, where many Imbriaco family members have since been buried. The photograph of him in a flight jacket was placed in a glass oval imbedded in the tombstone. My mother kept his leather coin purse which had some coins, a miniature mechanic's wrench and a chain with a cross. For many years she visited his grave at Easter time with her family.

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**Cross and Coins Recovered from Joe's Body at the Plane Crash Site.**

The crash site was near Doremus Avenue, adjoining the Butterworth-Judson chemical plant. The plant had manufactured picric acid for use as an explosive in WW I and the surrounding marsh was contaminated by this toxic material. Four rescuers were poisoned and one of them, Frank Hughes, 26 years old, had to be hospitalized but recovered.

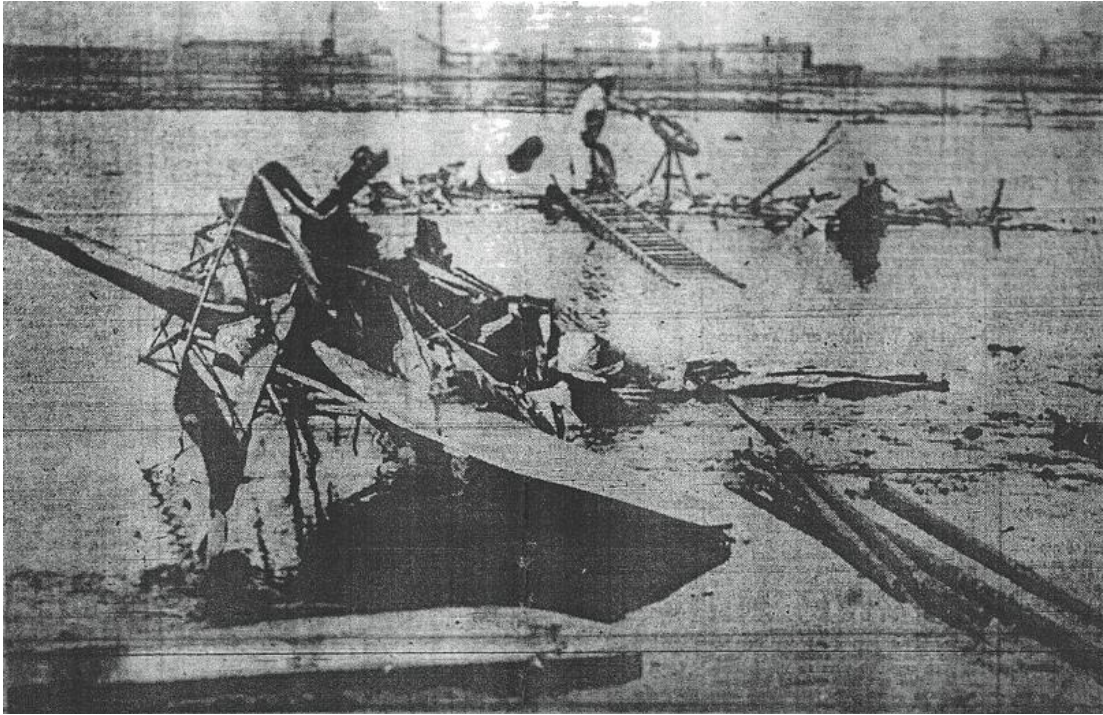


**Map Showing Location of Fatal Plane Crash on March 3, 1929**

The only known photo of the crash scene, which appeared in the Newark Evening News article published on March 4, 1929, is shown below:

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**Plane Crash Scene-Newark Evening News, March 4, 1929. The caption read "Quagmire Hampers Workers Recovering Bodies of Two Killed in Crash". Photo Courtesy of Newark Public Library.**

My mother often said the instructor was an old pilot but when I found the New York Times article on the crash, published March 4, 1929, I learned Schenck was only 33 years old. He had received the Distinguished Service Cross for his service in WW I as a flier in France, and was regarded as one of the most skilled pilots flying out of Newark Airport.

The New York Times, Elizabeth Daily Journal and Newark Evening News stories on the crash, which are reproduced below, state that Joe probably froze at the controls. About 60 percent of aviation accidents at the time were attributed to pilot error. Schenck had removed the fire extinguisher and it was speculated he tried to use it to stun Joe into releasing his grip on the stick. But another possible explanation is that Schenck simply got the fire extinguisher ready for a crash landing.

The New York Times article said the motor was heard stuttering and that a second plane flying that afternoon had the same problem but landed safely. The aviation gas supply may have been contaminated with water, causing the motor to misfire. This may have caused the plane to stall (lose air lift). At an altitude of only 300 feet there may not have been enough time for the instructor to regain control of the plane even if the student pilot turned over the stick quickly.

The Curtiss OX-5 engine in this plane was of an early V-8 liquid cooled design. It was the first US-designed engine to enter mass production, although it was considered obsolete when it did so in 1917. It nevertheless found widespread use on a number of aircraft, perhaps the most famous being the JN-4 Jenny. Some 12,600 units were built through early 1919. The wide availability of the engine in the surplus market, with prices as low as \$20, made it common until the 1930s, although it was considered unreliable for most of its service life.



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The engine was widely used on trainers and is believed to have caused the death of many prospective pilots. In particular the valve gear was fragile, and it had no provisions for lubrication other than grease and oil applied by hand, leading to overhaul times as short as fifty hours. Additionally the engine featured a single spark plug in each cylinder, and a single ignition system, in an era when ignition equipment was less reliable. Built by several contractors in large numbers, it suffered from uneven quality control.

It was the responsibility of the Department of Commerce to conduct an aircraft accident investigation and to file a report. A recent check of the government archives in Washington indicates that all aircraft accident reports earlier than 1930 were destroyed. However a document was found in the TAB archives that listed accidents from May 20, 1926 to May 16, 1930, including the crash on March 3, 1929. This document, showing the cause of the crash was not determined, is displayed below:

Aircraft accidents for 1929—Continued							
Place and date of accident	Airman	Passengers	Make and model of airplane	Name and model of engine	Primary cause of accident	Contributing cause of accident	For statistical purposes of Department of Commerce, probable cause was chargeable to—
NEW JERSEY			Swallow	Curtiss OX-5	Plane fell into spin in normal flight.	Unable to recover.	Do.
Newark, Jan. 13	William A. Hughes and Miss Lino.		Waco 10	do.	Collision with another plane on ground.	Undetermined.	Personnel.
Newark, Jan. 19	Jno. Vickers	Jno. L. Baker	Curtiss Robin	Curtiss Challenger.	Nosed up on landing.	While striking hole in landing.	Terrain.
Newark, Jan. 22	William A. Hughes	Jno. Beveridge	Waco 10	Curtiss OX-5	Collision with another ship on ground.	Failure to see plane directly ahead.	Personnel.
Newark, Feb. 3	James Inglis		Bird	do.	Plane nosed up while on ground.	No one in pilot seat.	Do.
Camden, Mar. 3	Willard M. Denny		Waco 10	do.	Collision with tree in landing.	Failed to see tree.	Do.
Newark, Mar. 3	A. W. Schenck	Joseph W. Imbriaco	do.	do.	Nose dive from approximately 300 feet.	Undetermined.	Doubtful.
Newark, Mar. 9	Kenneth B. Collins	George Davidson	do.	do.	Forced landing due to engine failure.	Landing in water.	Personnel, material, and terrain.
Hasbrouck Heights, Mar. 10	Henry W. Waldheim	Student, E. W. Estelle	Curtiss JN-4-D	do.	Plane failed to gain altitude after take-off.	Collision with fence.	Personnel.
Kenilworth, Mar. 15	Jimmie Doolittle		Vought Corsair	Wasp	Collision with tree landing at night.	No visibility due to fog.	Weather.
Newark, Mar. 17	Earl Stewart	Frank Harmon	Burnelli	2 Curtiss "1570"	Wheel coming off on landing.	Collapsing of landing gear.	Material.
Newark, Mar. 18	Lew Foote	Gertrude McSteever, W. Clifton Steever, Reginald D. Woodward, Raymond Helestedter, William Ziser, Walter F. Hentschel, Jr., Patrick M. Jannuzzi, Auton Boele, Thomas Henderson, William Marquette, Joseph Bauer, Frank Hogmasi, Steven Hogmasi, and Delmont Parsons	Ford AT-SN-41	3 J-5 Wrights	1 engine failed while still climbing from take-off.	Apparently pilot attempted to regain field by turning back, but was unable to do so and collided with a freight car while attempting a landing elsewhere.	Material and personnel.
Penns Neck, Mar. 31	Hugh Herndon, jr.	Paul Young and Gordon McLeer	New Standard	Wright J-5	Collision with fence on take-off.	Insufficient speed to clear fence.	Personnel.
New Brunswick, Apr. 3			Douglas M-4	Liberty-12	Partially destroyed by fire.	Welding.	Personnel.
Atlantic City, Apr. 6	Walter E. Allen		International F-17	Curtiss OXX-6	Plane caught fire in air; cause undetermined.		Material.
Trenton, Apr. 7	Wm. D. French	John H. Leib	Waco 10	Curtiss OX-5	Went into spin from stall.	Failure to recover.	Personnel.
Atlantic City, Apr. 13	Francis Farwell	One name unknown	DH Moth	Gipsy	Collision with fence on take-off.	Down wind take-off.	Do.
Jersey, Apr. 18	J. L. Salway	Mary E. Williams, Henry De La Vaulx, and Arthur Y. Conditto	Fairehile 71	Pratt Whitney Wasp	Plane struck high tension wires while endeavoring to reach air.	Dense fog and no visibility.	Weather.

### Department of Commerce Statistical Report of Air Crashes in 1929

The comments in the above report on the March 3, 1929 crash involving Joe are listed below:

- Primary cause of accident-Nose dive from approximately 300 feet
- Contributing cause of accident-Undetermined
- For statistical purposes, probable cause was due to -Doubtful

A glance at the report shows just how hazardous flying was in the early days of aviation. There were 17 airplane crashes, many fatal, in New Jersey during the period January 13-April 18, 1929 alone. Eight of



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these took place at Newark Airport. The Waco 10 biplane was involved in six of the crashes in the state and four at Newark.

Famed aviator Jimmy Doolittle crashed his experimental plane at the Kenilworth airport on March 14, 1929. He was landing at night in fog and struck a tree but survived. He helped develop instruments for blind landings and would lead the first bombing raids over Tokyo in WW II.

The worst crash in the U.S. up to that time took place at Newark on March 18, 1929. A Colonial Airways sightseeing plane crashed upon takeoff, killing 14 passengers. The plane was a Ford Tri-Motor.

The plane Joe was flying was a Waco biplane, produced in large numbers in the late 1920s and highly regarded for its safety and reliability. I sent the New York Times newspaper article to several aviation history experts. They confirmed the plane is a Waco Model 10 manufactured in 1928.

The WACO Aircraft Company of Troy, Ohio was the leading aircraft manufacturer of civilian aircraft in the U. S. from 1928 - 1935. Beginning in 1921 as the Weaver Aircraft Company in Lorain, Ohio, they moved to Troy in 1924. In 1929 the name was changed to simply the WACO Aircraft Company.

WACO produced over 80 models during the years 1919 - 1946, including large troop carrying planes used in the major invasions during WW II. The best selling WACO was the Model 10, with over 1100 being produced from 1927 - 1930. During the years 1939 - 1942, WACO also built over 600 Model UPF-7's for the military training program. WACOs were popular around the world and were sold to 37 different countries. The company went out of business in 1946 due to the drop in aircraft orders after WW II and new competition.

WACOs were purchased for many different uses. The WACO Taperwing Models ATO and CTO were known for their outstanding acrobatic qualities and were also used for air racing. WACO won the 1928 and 1929 Ford Reliability Tour also known as the National Air Tour, which was a transcontinental race sponsored by Ford pitting over 25 aircraft manufacturers against each other. One WACO was even invited to participate in the Paris International Air Show in 1936 where it placed first in the acrobatic events. Many wealthy film stars, celebrities and sportsmen purchased WACOs such as Ken Maynard, Howard Hughes, Roscoe Turner, Gar Wood, Powell Crosley, Jackie Cochran, and Henry King.

The Waco 10 was a single engine, three seat, single bay biplane constructed around steel tube frames. The wing covering was fabric and both upper and lower planes carried ailerons, which were strut linked. The cockpits were open. The two passengers sat side by side in a cockpit under the upper wing and ahead of the pilot, who had a separate cockpit. It had a split axle fixed undercarriage and a tail wheel. The main undercarriage was fitted with hydraulic shock absorbers, unusual at the time on a light aircraft. The landing gear was non-retractable and there were no wheel brakes. The fin could be trimmed on the ground to offset engine torque and the tail plane could be trimmed in flight. Initially it was powered by a Curtiss OX-5 water cooled 90° V-8 engine producing 90 hp. The engine, fitted with a wooden propeller, was started manually. Aviation gas was not as refined as today and crude storage conditions required the gas be filtered through a cheesecloth sock while fueling the tank to remove trash.

The first flight of the Waco 10 was in 1927. It was the most important type to be built by Waco, with 1,623 built during the 1927-1933 period, and was fitted with a large variety of engines of radial and V configuration.

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The Waco 10 turned out to have attractive handling and there was a ready supply of surplus WW I Curtiss engines. It was widely used to popularize aviation through barnstorming and joyrides, and frequently used as a trainer and by small operators for charter flights.

The trainer model had dual controls and was configured for flight instruction. The New York Times article says that instructor Peyton Schenck was in the front cockpit and Joe in the rear cockpit. This was a very common arrangement for a student with his instructor. The aircraft was designed to be flown solo from the rear cockpit so that was the only one that had a full set of controls. The front seat had just the basic throttle, stick, rudder and instruments. The instructor would be able to fly quite well in this limited cockpit, and it would be unusual to put a student up front except for his very early flights.

Noted for quick and straightforward takeoffs, a speedy rate of climb and equally tolerable landing speeds, the WACO 10's performance made it the most popular small aircraft in the United States. By 1927 more than 40 percent of small aircraft sold in the country were WACOs, including 350 WACO 10s at a sticker price of \$2,460 with the OX-5 engine.



1928 Ad for the Waco Biplane

In 1928, after the Waco 10 had entered production, Waco changed its designation system so that the basic Model 10, powered by a 90 hp Curtiss OX-5, became the GXE. The specifications of the GXE were:

### I) General characteristics

- **Crew:** one
- **Capacity:** two passengers
- **Payload:** 825 pounds including pilot, fuel and oil
- **Length:** 23 ft 6 in
- **Wingspan:** 30 ft 7 in
- **Height:** 9 ft 0 in
- **Airfoil:** Aeromarine 2A
- **Empty weight:** 1199 lb
- **Loaded weight:** 2025 lb





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Some photos of 1928 Waco Model 10/GXE biplanes are shown below:



1928 Waco Model 10 with Unidentified Pilot. Photo: [www.nationalwacoclub.com](http://www.nationalwacoclub.com)



1928 Waco Model 10/GXE. The Box Under Top Wing is the Engine Radiator.

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**A 1928 Waco 10/GXE Still in Use Today. Photo: [www.airliners.net](http://www.airliners.net)**

The Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum records show that the Waco 10 Joe was flying was the GXE model with federal aircraft registration number NC 7668. It was built in May 1928 and purchased by John O. Donaldson on September 13, 1928. He bought it from the New York Aircraft Distributors Inc., located at Curtis Field, Garden City, NY, for \$3,120.

This plane was involved in two accidents prior to the March 3, 1929 fatal crash. On January 13, 1929 pilot William A. Hughes had a collision with another plane on the ground, breaking the propeller. On January 22, 1929 the same pilot in the same plane failed to see a plane directly ahead of him, resulting in a ground collision that damaged the right wing, rib, and flat shoe, outer edge. Repairs were made and the plane was inspected and approved by the Department of Commerce on February 4, 1929. These were probably the accidents Joe's father cited when he urged his son to quit flying the night before the crash.

The only known photo of the plane Joe was flying is shown below. It was taken on the night of February 18, 1929 during a demonstration of the new runway lights at Newark Airport. Newark Airport had just obtained the contract with the Post Office to handle air mail for the metropolitan area. Since air mail was transported mainly on night flights, runway lights were critical. Westinghouse had invented a device called the "Televox", which could transfer sound waves to an electrical switch that activated the runway lights.

Air mail pilot George W. "Pete" Branson, who likely worked for the Newark Air Service, successfully demonstrated the Televox device that night. He was flying the Waco plane with aircraft registration number NC 7668, visible on the tail of the plane in this photo. The plane was equipped with a wind-



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powered siren that Branson activated on his approach to the airport. The siren generated a unique sound frequency that was picked up by a megaphone near the terminal. A relay switch turned on the runway lights for a safe landing. Branson repeated the test several times from various altitudes and distances up to 3,000 feet away, and the device worked each time.



**Pilot Pete Branson standing alongside the Waco GXE (NC 7668) owned by the Newark Air Service in a photo taken February 18, 1929. The flight demonstrated the automatic activation system for the runway lights. This is the same plane Joe Imbriaco flew for the fatal flight on March 3, 1929.**

This photo and the test flights show the plane was in good condition after repairs were made as a result of the ground collision on January 22, 1929.

The Newark Evening News article said Donaldson was flying this plane himself just fifteen minutes before Joe's fatal flight on March 3, 1929. It is not known if he was giving instruction to another pilot or just wanted to check the condition of the plane before turning it over to pilot Schenck. He told the reporter the plane flew well and responded rapidly to the controls.

In 1929 Donaldson became the exclusive New Jersey dealer for Mohawk Pinto biplanes, signing a contract for ten planes. Two of these were ordered for immediate delivery for use as trainers by the Newark Air Instruction flight school. Perhaps the Mohawks offered a technical or safety advantage over the Waco biplanes but this is not documented.

On September 7, 1930 Donaldson was demonstrating stunt flying at the American Legion air show in Philadelphia when his plane failed to come out of a tail spin and crashed. He died in a hospital two hours later. He was only 33 years old. The same year the Newark Air Service hangar was destroyed by



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fire, causing \$40,000 in damage to the building, planes and equipment. The company rebuilt and continued as the leading general aviation center at Newark Airport for many years.

However another tragedy befell the Newark Air Service flight school on September 13, 1932 when their de Havilland Moth biplane crashed into the marsh just east of the airport. The location of the crash and the circumstances were eerily similar to the crash on March 3, 1929. The school's chief pilot Daniel Probst, 37, of Ridgefield Park, and student flier William Fitze, 26, of Chatham, were killed when the plane faltered at an altitude of 150 feet and nose-dived into the muddy marsh. This was Fitze's first flight and pilots who inspected the wreck thought he became frightened and moved the stick to the forward or diving position. The stick in the forward cockpit, occupied by Probst, was broken, indicating he might have pulled back on the stick hard to try to regain control of the plane. A photo of this type of plane, which looks similar to the Waco 10, is shown below:



**de Havilland DH 82A Tiger Moth-This Type of Plane Had a Fatal Crash at Newark in 1932.**

**Photo: Royal Air Force, [www.raf.mod.uk](http://www.raf.mod.uk)**

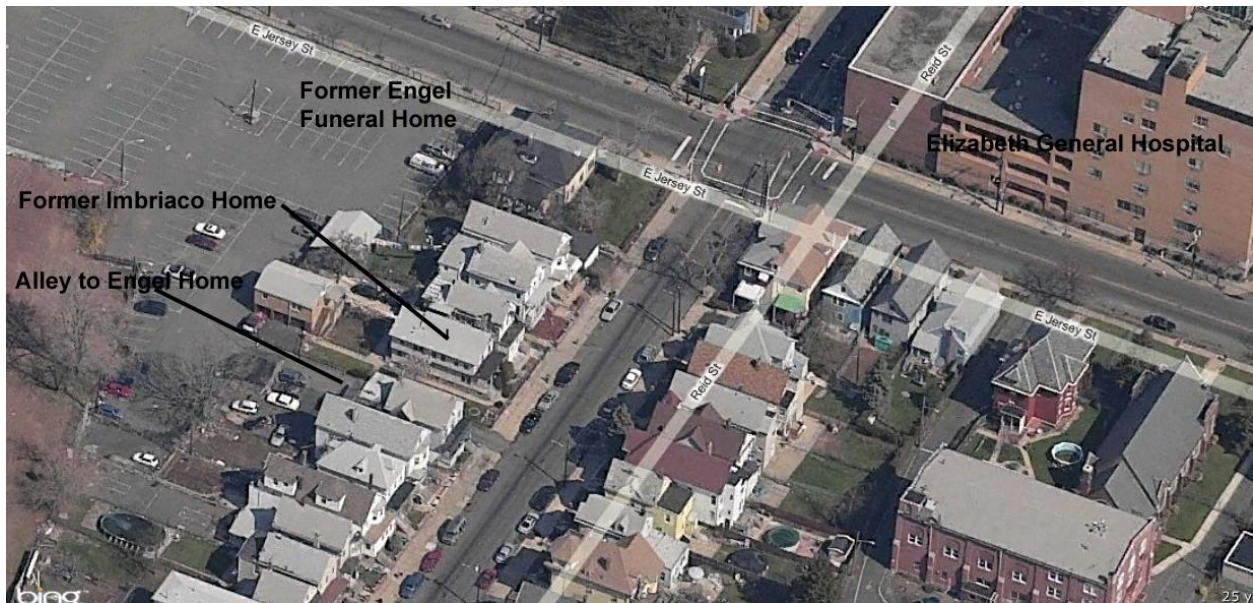
My cousin Joseph E. Imbriaco, Dominic's son, recently told me some intriguing information. He took a drafting class at Grover Cleveland Jr. High School, taught by Dominic Sousa. Mr. Sousa showed him a piece of a plane wreck that was in a storage room. He remembers that it looked like the welded steel tube framework for the rear of a plane. This would be consistent with the skeleton of the rear fuselage of a Waco 10. Mr. Sousa also taught Uncle Pat years earlier, so perhaps that led to the acquisition of a piece of the wreckage from the fatal flight of March 3, 1929, but we cannot be certain.

Cousin Joe related other sad postscripts to this story. There was a life insurance policy on Joe but the company refused to pay because he was piloting a plane. Carmela suffered a long despondency over Joe's death. Her emotional state was further impaired by the Engel Funeral Home's use of the alleyway alongside her home to line up funeral corteges. John filed a lawsuit against the funeral home in 1933 and a trial was held, with son Dominic testifying on behalf of his mother. The Imbriacos felt they had

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won the lawsuit, but then the Judge held a meeting with lawyers for both sides in his private chamber. The decision then went in favor of the Engel Funeral Home. This case has been cited in other legal disputes concerning easement rights.



**Aerial View of Imbriaco Home, 44 Reid St., Today. The Use of the Adjoining Alley by the Engel Funeral Home Was the Subject of a Lawsuit in 1933.**

I have written this history to memorialize my Uncle Joe Imbriaco's life. He left behind few photos or personal effects. Only two of his siblings survive, my dear Aunt Louise, age 91, and Uncle Pat, age 95, who still remember growing up with Joe and the tragedy on March 3, 1929.

I hope this story will reach the younger generations of Imbriacos who perhaps have only heard that Joe died in a plane crash long ago but know little of his life.

It was tragic that Joe died at only 20 years of age, with the pain and sorrow of his loss remaining with loving family members for years. He was a bright, ambitious young man, impressing the owner of the company he worked for, who was paying for his education at Columbia University. He may have become the first Imbriaco to graduate from college. We can only guess at what he may have accomplished if he had lived a normal life span and had a family of his own.

But Joe had a spirit of adventure that many of us dream about but rarely carry out. That is what I remember most of all about him.

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- 11) "Poisoned in Newark Bog", New York Times, March 8, 1929 (reproduced below)
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- 14) "2 Killed in Crash of Plane in Marsh", New York Times, September 14, 1932 (see below)
- 15) "Televox Lights Port at Call from Plane", New York Times, February 19, 1929
- 16) "Floodlights Turn On Without Aid by Approaching Plane", Owosso Argus-Press, (Owosso, MI), February 19, 1929
- 17) "Charles Lindbergh", Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles\\_Lindbergh](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Lindbergh), accessed March 15, 2010
- 18) "Curtiss OX-5", Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curtiss\\_OX-5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Curtiss_OX-5), accessed March 20, 2010



# The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929

FLIER AND PUPIL DIE IN CRASH AT NEWARK  
New York Times, Mar 4, 1929; ProQuest Historical Newspapers  
pg. 23

## FLIER AND PUPIL DIE IN CRASH AT NEWARK

Plane, Flying Low, Dives Into  
Bog Near Airport and Two  
Aviators Are Buried.

### PLUNGE MYSTIFIES AIRMEN

One Theory Is That Student, in  
Alarm, 'Froze' Controls—Pilot  
a War Veteran.

### MARSH MUD BALKS RESCUE

Firemen and Others Work Hours to  
Move Wreckage—Witnesses Say  
Motor "Missed" Before Fall.

An instructor and a student pilot were killed yesterday afternoon when their plane crashed on the mud flats a mile to the north of the Newark Airport thirty-five minutes after they had taken off for a short practice flight. The instructor was Lieutenant A. Peyton Schenck, 33 years old, of 1,358 Marlborough Avenue, a war flier who had received the Distinguished Service Cross for gallantry in action in France, and the student was Joseph W. Imbriaco, 21, of Elizabeth. His father, John Imbriaco, said last night that before yesterday's fatal flight he had pleaded with his son to give up flying.

The crash occurred at noon and was witnessed by several motorists on Doremus Avenue, two hundred yards from the spot where the plane hit, and by Frank Duffy and David Welsh of Bayonne, employees in the Rhodes & Manville plant, adjoining the scene of the accident. These two men described the accident in detail as they saw it, but officials of the airport and of the Department of Commerce still were unable to explain the cause of the crash.

Late last night firemen and policemen with scores of volunteer workers were trying to extricate the bodies.

#### Plane Soars Over Swampy Lands.

The two fliers took off from Newark Airport about 11:30 A. M. with Lieutenant Schenck in the forward cockpit, and flew over the Newark meadows, swampy waste lands interspersed with factories and crossed and recrossed by railroad tracks, wires and highways.

The swampy land in which the plane came down is bounded on the north by Doremus Avenue, which is flanked by poles carrying heavy wires. To the east is the Rhodes & Manville plant, and to the west a high wire fence and more boggy land. Just to the south the land is a bit higher and covered with tall marsh grass.

The plane when Duffy and Welsh first saw it, they reported, seemed to be coming in over the wires on Doremus Avenue. The motor was running but seemed to be missing, they said, and the pilot was obviously trying to make a landing either on the muddy flat, which was partly covered with water, or on the grass plot beyond.

#### Craft Dives Into Mud.

Suddenly, from an altitude estimated by the watchers at about two hundred feet, the plane settled, appeared to strike one wheel and bounced into the air and again came down, this time on its nose. So severe was the impact that it bored into the mud and water as it turned over, burying the occupants underneath.

While Duffy and Welsh struggled through the bog to the plane Albert Hamilton of 5 Verdun Street, Newark, who was in his car on the Lincoln Highway, which joins Doremus Avenue, called a policeman, and within a few minutes reserves and an ambulance arrived. Firemen also were called, but their united efforts were not enough to lift the fuselage and free the men underneath. If Schenck and his companion were not killed when the plane struck, they were drowned or suffocated in the mud.

Soon after the arrival of the policemen and firemen a switch engine was obtained from the Central Railroad of New Jersey and run into a siding behind the Rhodes & Manville plant. A cable was connected to the engine and attached to the fuselage and the engine backed. So great was the suction of the mud that the frame of the plane parted and the tail came away, leaving engine and the body of the fuselage with its occupants still buried in the mud.

#### Ladders Enable Rescuers to Work.

Firemen and other rescuers found themselves sinking in the soft and treacherous stuff, and finally extension ladders from the fire truck were placed about the wreck to make it possible for the crews to work.

Additional help was brought from the Newark Airport and mechanics under the direction of Lieutenant Richard Aldworth, in charge of air traffic at the airport, and Captain John O. Donaldson, president of the Newark Air Service, which owns the plane, started taking apart all that was left above the mud.

Captain Donaldson and other pilots who came to the scene were mystified by the accident. As poor as landing facilities were, they agreed that Schenck should have been able to bring the little plane, a Waco biplane, down safely even with a crippled motor. It was Captain Donaldson's theory that Imbriaco, frightened by the emergency, "froze" on to the controls as Schenck was bringing the plane down.

#### Believes Student "Froze" to Stick.

"Schenck was a splendid pilot with a lot of experience," Captain Donaldson said, "and even if the motor had failed he was not the man to be fazed by the conditions. Imbriaco was an excitable lad, and it is my belief that under the stress of the circumstances he froze the stick."

Other pilots thought that Schenck was trying to "stretch" a landing and that in seeking to glide while his motor was refusing to deliver the power necessary, and without sufficient flying speed the plane "fell off" and struck.

A report that one of the rescuers found that Schenck had seized a fire extinguisher gave credence, in Captain Donaldson's opinion, to his theory that the pilot had intended to compel his student by force to let go of the controls. Later, however, policemen said that they had not yet reached the bodies, which were embedded in several feet of mud and water.

After several attempts to move the wreck had failed, the rescuers started

fire engine pumps in an attempt to lower the water, and firemen began to build a cofferdam around the wreck. As darkness fell, emergency flood lights were rigged and the work went on into the night.

Thousands tried to get to the scene. Among the visitors during the afternoon were Mayor Jerome T. Congleton, James W. Costello, municipal airport engineer; Commissioner John F. Murray Jr. and Peter J. O'Toole Jr., Supervisor of the Port of Newark, where the airport is located.

#### Schenck Was War Pilot.

Schenck was born at Greensboro, N. C. He lived with his mother, Mrs. A. Richard Parkhurst, and a brother, David, in Plainfield. In 1917 he enlisted in the army and was assigned to the Air Service. After training he was sent overseas and in October, 1918, was cited in orders for gallantry in action, for which he received the Distinguished Service Cross. He resigned his commission in the regular army at the close of the war and quit aviation as a profession for a time. He kept in touch with flying, however, as a reserve officer in the Air Corps, and about six months ago joined Captain Donaldson's organization as an instructor. He was a transport pilot. Captain Donaldson said.

Imbriaco was employed in a chemical plant in Elizabeth and was a part-time student in chemistry at Columbia University, his father said yesterday. Recently he took up flying against his parents' wishes.

Yesterday morning after attending church he returned home and prepared to leave at once for the airport.

The boy's father urged him to wait at least for breakfast and then again begged him to give up flying, recalling to him the reports of numerous fatal crashes.

"He said there was no danger and laughed at our fears," the father said last night.

Another student pilot episode that might have been serious occurred at the airport during the afternoon. Al Krapish, a pilot, and George Kalhust, a student, took off for a short flight over the meadows with the student at the controls. The motor sputtered and a forced landing in the meadows appeared necessary. The student at once turned the operation over to Krapish, who brought the plane down safely.

## The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929

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Reproduction of Elizabeth Daily Journal Article of March 4, 1929 from Microfilm:



**Joseph Imbriaco**

Elizabethan whose body sunk four feet in soil. Firemen engaged fifteen hours in rescue work.

### *Firemen Recover Bodies of Fliers*

#### *Treacherous Swamps Near Port Newark Yield Forms of Elizabeth and Plainfield Men, Killed in Plane Crash*

After fifteen hours of burrowing in much more treacherous than quicksand, Newark firemen under the glare of floodlights early this morning recovered the body of Joseph Imbriaco, aviation student, of 44 Reid street, Elizabeth, buried in a Port Newark field yesterday afternoon in a nose dive of their craft. Three hours later they brought up the body of Lieut. A. Peyton Schenck, D.S.C., of Plainfield, World War I ace, who was piloting the biplane when it fell.

Lieutenant Schenck and Imbriaco took off for a lesson from the Newark airport shortly before noon yesterday. The plane circled outward over the terrain south of the airport and then swung back toward the landing field.

Motorists and pedestrians in Doremus avenue at 12:15 o'clock heard the purring drone of a motor above them, perhaps 1,000 feet up. Several were watching when suddenly it shot downward. Before anyone sensed that tragedy was at hand, the plane was barely 200 feet from the ground, diving madly toward the plant of the Butterworth-Judson factory off Doremus avenue.

## **The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929**

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Reproduction of Elizabeth Daily Journal Article of March 4, 1929, con't:

The motor was roaring, even as the plane struck one wheel against a huge waste pipe and bounded forty feet in the air. It shot groundward again and buried itself in the peculiar muck that surrounds the plant. In an instant only the rear of the fusilage remained above the surface.

Of all those who saw the nose dive and heard the impact on the pipe, none thought of telephoning for aid, but instead hastened to the spot. Their efforts were unsuccessful and a half-hour later H. Watt, of 940 Flora street, Elizabeth, drove along the highway until he found a traffic patrolman and told him of the crash.

Police reserves and fire companies were sent to the scene. Radioed train crews and others had gathered but the baseless muck steadily sucked the plane and its passengers deeper.

A crew of a switching train on the Butterworth-Judson siding hooked a heavy line from the locomotive to the rear of the plane but the line snapped without releasing the craft from the slime. Another rope was found and again used by the locomotive to try to pull the buried plane to the surface. (.....) more successful and when the department apparatus and (----) of the Port Newark field arrived, the plane had settled still deeper.

### **Start Pumping Out Water**

Fire trucks started pumping water out of the holes. Lieut. Richard Aldworth, who had served in France with Lieutenant Peyton, came from Newark airport to assist in the work. Capt. John O. Donaldson, president of the Newark Air Service, also arrived. He said that probably the student had "frozen" at the controls as he himself had been up in the plane only a short time before and the craft was in good operating condition.

The work was carried on under handicaps. All about the scene was slimy muck on which none could stand in safety, unless supported by a "raft". Even a newspaper would prevent a man from sinking but when he stepped off it, he began to sink. Those familiar with the ground explained that picric acid thrown off from Butterworth-Judson robbed the soil of substance and left it more sinister than quicksand.

All the afternoon the work went on without much headway. Floodlights were set up as darkness fell and the firemen continued their efforts. Truck Company 8, with Acting Chief George F. Lynch and Captain McLaughlin supervising, worked unrelieved throughout the night.

At 3:13 o'clock in this morning they recovered Imbriaco's body. Heartened by this, they returned to their task and at 6:45 o'clock Lieutenant Schenck's body was brought to the surface.

Imbriaco was found beneath four feet of the oozing black slime and Peyton's was two feet deeper. This alone betrayed the character of the terrain, for at 6 o'clock last night Lieutenant Schenck's right arm, with a fire extinguisher clutched in his hand, was visible above the surface. In the twelve hours that intervened the body had sunk six feet.

A hasty examination disclosed that practically every bone in the bodies of the two men had been broken, probably in the first impact when the plane hit the waste pipe. Both had died instantly, officials said.



## **The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929**

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Reproduction of Elizabeth Daily Journal Article of March 4, 1929, con't:

Some time elapsed after the accident before it was learned who were in the airplane. The families then were notified.

Donaldson and Aldworth said that they believed that Imbriaco had become frightened for some reason and had "frozen" at the controls, preventing Lieutenant Peyton from retaining guidance of the plane and that Peyton, sensing their fate, had seized the fire extinguisher as a bludgeon to break the other's grip. The biplane struck the waste pipe, however, before he could save them.

Lieutenant Peyton was the son of Mrs. A.R. Parkhurst, of 1358 Marlborough road, Plainfield, and had three German planes to his credit at the end of the war. Ten years ago he yielded to his mother's pleas and gave up flying, but resumed a year ago. He received the Distinguished Service Cross for his work in the A.E.F.

### **Employed by Chemist**

Imbriaco was assistant to a chemist at Columbia University, but members of the family were unable to give his employer's name. He had been employed by him five years, working both at the University and at the plant of the Metals Disintegrating Company in Union.

Imbriaco was born in this city 21 years ago and attended Public School 6 and the Vocational School. Soon afterward he became associated with the Columbia chemist.

His flair for aviation had developed about two months ago, according to members of his family, and since that time he had been on a dozen flights but had not yet attempted to handle an airplane. They said they understood that Lieutenant Schenck had 5,000 hours in the air to his credit.

None of the members of the family was familiar with the details of the accident and none was at the airport at the time it occurred. Imbriaco's interest had extended to the point where he was buying books on aviation to study.

The family had lived only a short time at 44 Reid street, although residing in Elizabeth for many years.

The survivors are his parents, Mr. and Mrs. John Imbriaco, three brothers, Dominic, Patrick, and Nunzio, and five sisters, the Misses Viola, Mildred, Mary and Louise Imbriaco and Mrs. Anna Andreola. Mrs. Andreola lives at 109 Race street and all the others at 44 Reid street.

### BODIES FOUND IN AIR WRECK.

Dead in Newark Crash Recovered,  
but Cause Is Still Unproved.

The bodies of Lieutenant A. Peyton Schenck, war flier and an instructor for the Newark Air Service, and his pupil, Joseph W. Imbriaco, who lost their lives when their plane dived into the Newark meadows Sunday, were recovered early yesterday morning after fifteen hours of unremitting labor.

From the position in which the

bodies were found officials of the Newark Air Service are of the opinion that Lieutenant Schenck had removed the straps attached to the sides of the cockpit and seized his fire extinguisher and was about to strike his pupil to force him to release the controls, which he had frozen through fright when the ship began to lose altitude. Other pilots discounted this story, saying that it was the natural thing for an experienced pilot to seize his fire extinguisher, in a forced landing, in case of a crack-up and subsequent fire. Three investigations are under

way, one by Lieutenant Richard Aldworth, Newark air traffic expert, who will report to Mayor Congleton this morning. A second is being conducted by a representative of the Department of Commerce and a third by the police for the Prosecutor's office.

The New York Times

Published: March 5, 1929

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### POISONED IN NEWARK BOG.

Four Who Went to Aid of Plane  
Suffer From Picric Acid.

Frank Hughes, 26 years old, of 9 Harding Place, Newark, is in the Homeopathic Hospital at East Orange suffering from picric poisoning, which has been working through his system since last Sunday, when he and others went to the aid of Lieutenant Peyton Schenck and his pupil, Joseph Imbriaco, who were killed when their plane crashed in poison-soaked mire of the Newark meadows.

The accident occurred near the Butterworth Judson chemical plant, which during the war was the largest producer of picric acid in the world, but it now stands idle. It was used in the manufacture of dyes, explosives and picrates. Tons of refuse were emptied into the bogs and were unnoticed until the accident. While the rescue was in progress several persons felt stinging pains, but no one thought it was anything serious until Tuesday night, when Billy Hughes received a call from his brother that he was ill.

Dr. William F. Davis of 91 Hawthorne Avenue, East Orange, diagnosed the case as picric poisoning, which is usually fatal. Hughes's condition was much improved yesterday.

Three others at the airport had milder cases of poisoning.

The New York Times

Published: March 8, 1929

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## **The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929**

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Reproduction of Newark Evening News Article, March 4, 1929 from microfilm at Newark Public Library:

### **Fliers' Bodies Are Recovered From Mudhole Airport Corps Builds Dam Where Student and Instructor Crashed**

Building a coffer dam around the mudhole into which a plane from Newark Airport crashed, firemen early this morning recovered the bodies of the two fliers killed yesterday noon.

The body of the student flier, Joseph W. Imbriaco, twenty-one, of 44 North Reid Street, Elizabeth, was taken from the mud at 3:30 AM.

The body of the instruction pilot, Lieutenant A. Peyton Schenck, thirty-four, of 1358 Marlborough Avenue, Plainfield, was recovered at 6:50. Both were taken to Mullin's morgue at 230 Lafayette Street.

The fliers, whose deaths were the first of persons operating from the airport, lost their lives when their light Waco biplane dived 500 feet near Doremus Avenue as Lieutenant Schenck attempted to effect a forced landing.

Lieutenant Schenck's mother was stricken with apoplexy at the news of her son's death.

Officials of the Newark Air Service, Inc., which owned and operated the plane, and those in charge at the airport were certain today that the crash was caused by Imbriaco, the student flier, freezing the controls through nervousness as Lieutenant Schenck sought to land. No other explanation seemed to fit as well with known facts.

### **Extinguisher in His Hand**

This theory was substantiated by the finding of a small fire extinguisher grasped in Lieutenant Schenck's right hand. Officials and fliers expressed the opinion that the instructor had taken the extinguisher from its rack to strike Imbriaco on the head hard enough to render him unconscious. Drastic action is often necessary to free controls grasped in the vise-like grip by students temporarily paralyzed by fear.

The plane was wrecked almost beyond recognition. It turned over after the crash, pinning both fliers under the engine, and the fuselage was broken almost in half. Several persons who saw the plunge reached the spot within a few minutes, but could do nothing to help the fliers, if they were still alive, for the weight of the engine caused the wreckage to sink in the soft mud.

The plane landed in the shallow pond of seepage water and waste chemicals next to one of the old Butterworth-Judson chemical plants on the west side of Doremus Avenue. The chemical plant is directly opposite the Gulf Refining Company at 100 Doremus Avenue and is midway between the Central Railroad bridge and the Lincoln Highway. The scene of the crash was 300 yards in from the road.

Lieutenant Schenck and Imbriaco took off from the airport at 11:35 AM for dual control instruction work. Student flying is banned at Newark Airport during Saturday and Sunday afternoons and the flight was to be the last student work of the day.

Imbriaco, who had four to five hours of dual instruction to his credit, took the controls in the rear cockpit and the instructor flier sat ahead of him in the usual manner for student flying.

Other fliers at the airport saw the Waco take off and fly away from the field just like any other ship and paid no one attention to it. The crash came at 12 o'clock after the plane had been in the air more than thirty minutes.

The plane had just passed over the Ford plant in the Lincoln Highway when it began to lose altitude, witnesses said, as if preparing to land. Without any warning or noise to indicate what caused it, the glide became a plunge and the ship shot down at a sharp angle like a diving gull. The fliers were

## **The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929**

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Reproduction of Newark Evening News Article, March 4, 1929 con't:

unable to bring the ship out of the dive as it was too near the ground and it plunged into the mud and water nose first.

Alfred Ebert of 22 Richard Street and Alfred Hamilton of 5 Ferdon Street were driving along Doremus Avenue in an automobile when the plane crashed directly opposite them. Both witnesses noted particularly that the engine of the ship was still firing when it plunged. They saw the plane before the dive and said it seemed rather low.

Two workmen were eating lunch within 100 feet of the spot where the ship landed. Frank Duffy of 35 East Thirty-eighth Street and Daniel Welsh of 1053 Broadway, both of Bayonne, said neither pilot attempted to jump as the plane neared the ground. Their description of the accident tallied with Ebert's and Hamilton's and they agreed the ship crashed in a straight dive without any suggestion of a spin.

### **Agree on Theory of Frozen Controls**

Lieutenant Richard Aldworth, manager of Newark Airport, and Captain John O. Donaldson, head of the Newark Air Service, after a survey of the scene, declared the crash undoubtedly resulted from freezing of the controls by the student flier. Taking into consideration that the ship was flying low and losing altitude, they thought some minor engine or control trouble resulted in Lieutenant Schenck's decision to land in a patch of firm level ground west of the mud and water.

When the controls were locked by the flier, they said, the plane was already so low Lieutenant Schenck was unable to free the stick in time to save the ship.

Captain Donaldson, who gave Imbriaco earlier instruction work, said the student "was very hard on the controls." The student flier was strong and it would have been easily possible for him to grip the stick so tightly that Lieutenant Schenck would have been unable to free them.

### **Ship in Good Condition**

The ship, which was inspected recently by the Department of Commerce, was in good condition, Captain Donaldson said, and answered rapidly to the controls. Captain Donaldson flew the plane fifteen minutes before the other fliers took off. It was powered by a Curtis OX-5 engine.

It was more than forty minutes after the accident that someone telephoned Police Headquarters. Operator Patrick J. McNamara called Fire Headquarters as he made the connection to the desk officer and gave the location of the plane. Truck Company No. 8, under the command of Captain McLaughlin, reached the scene shortly before 1 o'clock and a detail of traffic officers under Lieutenant William H. Wiedmann and Third Precinct reserves under Captain Bolger arrived soon after.

A crowd gathered quickly as firemen and airport mechanics worked to free the bodies. Police had difficulty in establishing lines, as the crowd poured in from all directions. About 500 persons stayed all afternoon and many were there at night attracted by the searchlights.

Firemen sprawled about in the mud near the plane as they sought to lift the wreckage. The crowd, forgetting the tragedy, laughed at their difficulties. Deputy Chief Lynch sent in a call for Engine No. 5 and the pump was used to draw off water. Running at capacity for three hours it averaged 1,000 gallons a minute and lowered the water appreciably.

### **Fireman Goes Down Into Bog**

Several firemen lost their boots in the quagmire and members of the engine company lent theirs to the truck squad. One fireman slipped into a hole and was in mud up to his armpits and sinking fast before his companions could push a plank toward him.



## **The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929**

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Reproduction of Newark Evening News Article, March 4, 1929 con't:

Wreckage of the plane was strewn over several feet and fliers said it must have been going at terrific speed when it landed. Mechanics started to take the tail of the plane back to the airport but were stopped by police until Chief County Medical Examiner Martland gave them permission to remove it.

Part of the under carriage was pulled from the mud by a switching engine of the Central Railroad to which a long cable was attached. It was impossible however to use the locomotive to pull the plane engine up as it was seen that if the motor were removed the bodies would be lost by mud covering them.

Mayor Congleton, Commissioner Murray and Chief Engineer Costello came to the scene at 4 o' clock, but left when they saw the work proceeding satisfactorily. The Mayor asked Lieutenant Aldworth to submit a report on the accident and rescue work.

### **World War Ace**

Lieutenant Schenck was an ace in the World War and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross for his daring flying. He shot down several German planes and won three citations. After the war he stopped flying at the request of his mother, Mrs. A.R. Parkhurst with whom he lived, and for nearly ten years did not go near a plane.

Less than a year ago, however, the old urge to fly lured him around air fields and when Newark Airport opened he decided to fly again. He came to the Newark Air Service for instruction to refresh his control but after a few minutes in the air, Captain Donaldson told Lieutenant Schenck he was a better flier than his instructor. Four weeks ago Lieutenant Schenck became a regular pilot for the Newark Air Service.

The flier was not married. Lieutenant Aldworth was deeply affected by Lieutenant Schenck's death, for the men were cadets together in the advance training school in France. They served in different outfits but saw each other frequently.

Lieutenant Schenck was born in Greensboro, N.C. but came to Plainfield twenty years ago and graduated from Plainfield High School. Besides his mother, he leaves a brother David Schenck.

Imbriaco, who was a laborer, took up flying three weeks ago over the protests of his father. He suddenly decided he wanted to become a flier, relatives said, and pleadings of his family were unable to change his determination. In addition to his parents, he leaves three brothers and five sisters. He was employed by the Metal Disintegrating Plant of Union.

## **The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929**

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Reproduction of Newark Evening News Article, March 5, 1929 from microfilm at Newark Public Library:

### **Student Flying Seen as Peril City Officials Await Report on Fatal Crash Before Taking Action**

The plane crash Sunday in which a student flier, Joseph W. Imbriaco, and his instruction pilot, Lieutenant A. Peyton Schenck, were killed has intensified the belief of city and airport officials that student flying is not compatible with operations of a transport air terminal.

Mayor Congleton and his fellow commissioners are awaiting a report on the accident from Lieutenant Richard Aldworth, airport manager, before taking any action. This report may be submitted today.

Two months ago Chief Engineer Costello declared that flying school work presented a problem to city officials and that if Newark airport were to attain a strong position as a transport terminal it might be necessary to curtail student flying. When the airport is completed, Mr. Costello said, passenger "hopping" companies and student flying would be segregated in a remote section of the field.

The feeling against student flying has been intensified since the arrival of Lieutenant Aldworth and the shifting of air mail to Newark Airport. One of the first moves the new manager made was to decree stringent regulations for student fliers. Student flying was forbidden Saturday and Sunday afternoons when the sightseeing services are operating at capacity.

Several airports which are terminals for mail or passenger transport companies have prohibited student flying. Their officials say it should be limited to private flying fields where the inexperienced fliers will not have to worry about other planes.

### **Training of Fliers Necessary**

Another advantage of flying at private fields is that they may be situated in the country away from congested areas and may be surrounded by farm lands which could serve as emergency landing fields.

The Newark Air Service, Inc., of which Captain John O. Donaldson is president, has the exclusive flying school privileges at the airport. The concern was one of the first to operate from the field and is building a hangar.

Because training fliers is a necessary part of aviation development and because of Captain Donaldson's large investment at Newark Airport, city officials are loathe to take action against student flying. Captain Donaldson admitted, however, that about two students in 100 become panicky when danger threatened and were likely to freeze the controls.

One plan reported receiving consideration by city officials is to permit instruction pilots to take off and land at the airport but to have all instruction work done at some other field. This would enable the flying company and the students to benefit by the accessibility of Newark Airport without subjecting transport planes to extra danger.

A field in an undeveloped section near Jersey City has been mentioned as ideal for student work, and it is only a few minutes away from Newark Airport by air. There are many places nearby where emergency landings could be made without endangering persons on the ground. There are few such spots in the vicinity of Newark Airport.

### **Services for Victims**

Funeral services for Lieutenant Schenck will be held at Greensboro, N.C., his birthplace and home of his relatives. His mother, Mrs. A. Richard Parkhurst, who lived with the flier at 1358 Marlborough Avenue, Plainfield, will accompany the body to Greensboro today. The body will be placed on a train

## **The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929**

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Reproduction of Newark Evening News Article, March 5, 1929, con't:

**in Elizabeth this afternoon. The services will be held tomorrow afternoon at the home of an uncle, Paul W. Schenck.**

**Imbriaco will be buried Thursday afternoon but details of the services have not been arranged. He lived with his parents at 44 North Reid Street, Elizabeth.**



# The Life of Joseph W. Imbriaco 1908-1929

New York Times, September 14, 1932:

## 2 KILLED IN CRASH OF PLANE IN MARSH

**Bodies of Air Instructor and  
Student Buried in Ten Feet of  
Mud Near Newark Airport.**

### YOUTH ON HIS FIRST FLIGHT

**Motorcycle Policeman, Rushing to  
Aid Fliers, Is Injured in  
Collision With Bus.**

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

NEWARK, N. J., Sept. 13.—Daniel Probst, 37 years old, an experienced flying instructor, and William Fitze, 26 years old, a student flier of Chatham, N. J., were killed today when the D. H. Moth biplane in which they were flying crashed into a marsh near the Lehigh Valley Railroad, about a mile and a half east of Newark Airport.

The fliers' bodies were buried in about ten feet of mud. The police and firemen worked for more than four hours in an attempt to extricate them, but found it necessary to abandon the attempt until a derrick could be used to pull the bodies from the soft mud beneath the wreckage of the plane. The engine and a large part of the fuselage were below ground and sank further in the mud as an excavation was made.

The bodies of both men were recovered late tonight after the police and firemen had worked at the scene for nearly eight hours.

#### Baseball Fans See Accident.

More than 1,000 baseball fans who had been watching a game between the Newark Bears and the Baltimore Orioles at the Newark stadium, saw the plane falter suddenly at an altitude of about 150 feet and plunge down in a fatal nose dive. The plane struck the marsh within 150 feet of an embankment of the railroad where a gang of men were working on the tracks.

A call for police help resulted in serious injuries to Albert Houston, a motorcycle policeman, who crashed into a bus at Lafayette and Congress Streets, as he was hurrying to the scene. He was taken to St. James's Hospital in Newark, where it was found necessary to amputate his leg. A call for volunteers for a blood transfusion to save the policeman's life, was answered by more than forty members of the police force. Julius Hild of 80 Manhattan Avenue, Jersey City, driver of the bus, which was bound from New York to Philadelphia, was taken to police headquarters for questioning.

Probst who was employed as chief pilot by the Newark Air Service, took off from Newark Airport at about 3 P. M., with Fitze as his passenger, according to records at the airport. Fitze, the son of a building contractor of Chatham, had called at the airport today for his first flight, in preparation for a course of instruction under Probst.

The plane was flown West from the field in a wide circle at an altitude of about 1,000 feet. After a flight of about half an hour, the plane headed back toward the airport from the East. Joseph S. Gooley of Bayonne, section foreman of the railroad workers, said that as the plane flew over the railroad tracks it dived suddenly. As it struck the ground it had almost turned over completely in what is known as an "outside loop," he said.

#### Unable to Find Bodies.

The workmen and about thirty-spectators from the baseball stadium rushed to the scene, but were unable to find the bodies of the fliers. The front cockpit was below the surface of the ground and the rear cockpit was empty. The police and firemen were called and began immediately to dig for the bodies.

Pilots who made an inspection of the wreck said that the student flier apparently had become frightened and had moved the control stick to the forward, or diving position. The stick in the forward cockpit, occupied by Probst, apparently had been broken off as it was pulled back to bring the ship into control, the pilots said.

Probst, who was 37 years old, had taught fliers at most of the principal fields in this country. During the war he instructed Army fliers at Kelly Field, and later was an instructor at Roosevelt Field and Curtiss Airport at Valley Stream. He came here about eighteen months ago. Officials of the flying service said that although he had often been offered positions as a transport and passenger pilot, he had refused, saying he preferred to teach others to fly.

Probst lived in Ridgefield Park, N. J. He leaves his wife and a step-daughter.